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ABSTRACT

Students who achieve a GPA of 1.50 or lower over 12 credits at Douglas College are placed on academic probation. If their performance does not improve, they may be required to withdraw from the college temporarily or permanently. Academic probation is intended to provide an early warning and lead to remediation, rather than to be punitive. This paper reports on a study of the transcripts of 557 students (6% of the 9,227 Douglas students) at Douglas who were on academic probation in fall 1998. The study compared three groups: (1) all 557 students on probation; (2) students on probation for the first time in fall 1998 (228); and (3) students on probation prior to fall 1998, and still on probation in fall 1998 (329). Probationary students often had previous success before being placed on probation. Of the 228 students new to academic probation in 1998, 17% had entered the college two or more years earlier. Between 25% and 30% of students who go on probation eventually succeed, approximately 45% do not succeed, while another 30% are still in the probationary process. The paper notes the impact these students have on the workloads of academic counselors. (Author/NB)

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Academic Probation Study: Overview
Transcript Analysis of Fall 98 Probationary Students

ED 473 284

Introduction

Students who achieve a GPA of 1.50 or lower over 12 credits are placed on academic probation. After meeting with a counsellor, they are permitted to register again. If their performance does not improve, they may be required to withdraw from the college temporarily or permanently.

Academic probation is intended to provide an early warning and to lead to remediation, rather than to be punitive. Probationary students meet with counsellors, and in some instances with the Registrar, in order to determine what steps they can take to improve their grade point average (GPA), to select future courses appropriately, and to access services at the college that may help them.

The transcripts of 557 students on academic probation in fall 1998 were examined to document the enrolment patterns and subsequent academic success of probationary students. They were tracked until summer 2001.

The following sections of this overview compare three groups of students on probation:

- All Students; the full cohort of 557 students
- Students on probation for the first time in fall 1998
- Students on probation *prior* to fall 1998 (but who were still on probation in fall 1998)

The *Working Paper,* on which this overview is based, considers each group of students separately and presents a brief analysis of each group. This overview summarizes the results in a series of tables in order to describe the characteristics of each group of students

How many students are placed on Academic Probation?

Five hundred and fifty-seven of more than 9,000 students were on probation in fall 1998. This represents 6% of the student population for that semester. This can be separated further into students who were new to probation in the fall 98 semester, and those who were first placed on probation at an prior to fall 98.

	Number of Students on Probation	% of Students on Probation
On Probation for the first time in Fall 98	228	2.5%
On Probation prior to Fall 98	329	3.5%
All Probationary Students in Fall 98	557	6.0%

9,227 students enrolled in Fall 1998

Because students go on and off probation, the number of students on probation at any given time is less than the percentage of students who were ever on probation during their stay at Douglas College. The only additional information about academic probation at Douglas College was collected in a study conducted by the Institutional Research Office in 1997. The 1997 study determined that about 16% of students who entered Douglas College in 1992, roughly one in six, had been placed on probation at some point during their studies.

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When are students placed on probation?

Probationary students often had previous success before being placed on probation. For example, of the 228 students new to academic probation in fall 1998, 17% had entered the college two or more years earlier.

Year of Entry to Douglas College	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
1998	23%	46%	6%
1997	43%	37%	48%
1996 or earlier	34%	17%	45%

Part-time students may have enrolled for several semesters before they have accumulated 12 credits in which they achieved low grades. Other students may have avoided taking difficult courses in the early stage of their studies, or have switched programs.

What happens to students who are placed on probation?

Between 25 and 30 percent of students who go on probation eventually succeed; approximately 45% do not succeed, while another 30% are still in the probationary process.

Successful - are those who eventually got off probation, generally quickly.
Unsuccessful - are those who either left the college voluntarily or were required to withdraw.
In Process - are those who are continuing to take courses, many have not completed 12 credits required before their status is re-evaluated, others have withdrawn from the college for a semester and have since returned to take courses and remain on probation.

LEVELS OF SUCCESS:

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Successful	28%	26%	29%
Unsuccessful	43%	42%	44%
In Process	29%	32%	27%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Almost one third of fall 1998 probationary students left Douglas the following semester, regardless of when they first went on probation.

UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS – Departure Path

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Did not enrol in Winter 99	29%	28%	29%
Took 12 More Credits & Left	10%	11%	10%
Required to Withdraw	4%	3%	5%
SUBTOTAL	43%	42%	44%

The 28% of probationary students who successfully leave probation generally do so right away.

SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS – Path Leading to Success

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Completed 12 Credits Quickly & Successfully	25%	21%	26%
Returned to Probation for a Second Time, Eventually Successful	2%	2%	2%
Withdrew for 1 Semester, Eventually Successful	1%	2%	1%
SUBTOTAL	28%	25%	29%

How persistent are students who have encountered academic difficulty?

Student persistence at Douglas College can be demonstrated in several ways:

- 2/3 of students enrol at Douglas after being placed on probation
- 1/4 of students change programs after being placed on probation
- Most students enrol at Douglas College for several semesters after being placed on probation

When do probationary students leave Douglas College?

The majority of students continue with their studies at Douglas College after being placed on probation.

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Did not return to Douglas College after Fall 98	29%	28%	29%
Enrolled in 1999 and then left	33%	36%	31%
Enrolled at least once in 2000 or 2001	38%	36%	40%

How many courses do probationary students attempt?

More than 20% of students have attempted 10 or more courses after being placed on probation.

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Number of courses attempted since first placed on probation			
0 – 0	12%	28%	0%
1 – 4	23%	26%	21%
5 – 9	30%	23%	35%
10 – 14	14%	12%	16%
15 – 19	10%	7%	12%
20 – 40	11%	4%	16%

How many students change programs after being placed on probation?

Between 25% and 30% of students have changed programs at some point after being placed on probation. Several additional students have changed programs sometime prior to being placed on probation. About 10% of probationary students have changed programs three or more times during their attendance at Douglas College. Note: programs include General Studies, Science and Arts.

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Changed programs at any time *after* first being placed on academic probation			
Yes	27%	12%	38%
No	73%	88%	62%

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Number of different programs enrolled in altogether at Douglas			
One	60%	71%	53%
Two	29%	21%	35%
Three or more	10%	8%	12%

In how many semesters have probationary students enrolled at Douglas College?

Students who spent time on probation tended to have enrolled in a fair number of semesters in total at Douglas College, whether studying full-time or part-time.

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Total number of semesters attended at Douglas College			
1 – 4	37%	53%	26%
5 – 9	48%	38%	56%
10 – 14	13%	9%	16%
15 – 30	1%	0%	2%

Do probationary students succeed in subsequent courses?

Twenty-six percent of the full cohort of 557 students did not succeed in any courses after being placed on probation: 12% do not even try any more courses; 15% tried unsuccessfully. About 40% of probationary students subsequently succeed in five or more courses at Douglas College.

	Courses Completed Successfully – *ALL PROBATIONARY STUDENTS (n=557)*					
Courses Attempted	**0**	**1 – 4**	**5 – 9**	**10 – 14**	**15 or more**	
0	12%	-	-	-	-	12%
1 – 4	11%	12%	-	-	-	23%
5 – 9	4%	18%	8%	-	-	30%
10 – 14	-	3%	7%	4%	-	14%
15 or more	-	1%	3%	8%	9%	21%
Totals	**26%**	**34%**	**19%**	**12%**	**9%**	**100%**

(154 students)	28%	Cleared probation and returned to good academic standing
(89 students)	16%	Required to withdraw for one semester because of subsequent low grades
(15 students)	3%	Required to withdraw permanently because of subsequent low grades
(217 students)	39%	Left Douglas College without clearing probationary status
(96 students)	17%	Still in process

Do students go on probation more than once?

Sixty-four (12%) of the full cohort of 557 probationary students attained good standing status and were eventually put on probation for a second time. Another 7 students (1%) were on probation for a third time. These students emphasize the point made earlier regarding the persistence of students at Douglas College.

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
On probation twice	12%	7%	15%
On probation three times	1%	0%	2%

What are the cumulative GPAs of probationary students?

The period(s) when students are on probation may be only a portion of the entire stay at Douglas College. While they must have had some semesters with low grades to be placed on probation, there may have been other semesters in which they obtained high grades. The cumulative grade point average (GPA) includes grades in all courses taken at Douglas College.

The GPA can be an imperfect measure if students take courses with mastery grading, such as in Developmental Studies (DVST) or English as a Second Language (EASL). In this situation, it is possible to have a GPA of zero and yet be in good academic standing. Nevertheless, since most courses award letter grades, the GPA is a reasonable measure of academic success. The majority of probationary students have a cumulative GPA in the 1.00 to 2.66 range (i.e. "Pass" and "C" letter grades).

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
GPA			
3.67 – 4.50 (A's)	0%	0%	0%
2.67 – 3.66 (B's)	3%	3%	3%
1.67 – 2.66 (C's)	33%	29%	36%
1.00 – 1.66 (Pass)	36%	35%	37%
0	28%	33%	24%

What is the academic standing of probationary students in their most recent semester at Douglas College?

Students in this study may have left Douglas College in any semester following fall 1998, may still be enrolled, or may have left and returned. Whatever the last semester listed on their transcript, about one quarter of the total had returned to Good Standing at that point.

	ALL (n=557)	On Probation for the first time in Fall 98 (n=228)	On Probation prior to Fall 98 (n=329)
Academic Status			
Good Standing	24%	22%	26%
On Probation	46%	57%	39%
In Progress	7%	6%	8%
Required to Withdraw for one semester	18%	14%	20%
Required to Withdraw permanently	5%	1%	7%

What types of students are at risk?

Students in Commerce & Business Administration, Criminology and Science programs are most at risk. Arts and General Studies students are close to the college average and students in all other programs are least at risk.

	FALL 1998 ENROLMENT			
	On Academic Probation		Total Enrolment	
	Enrolment (most recent program)	Distribution	Total Enrolment	Distribution
Over-represented				
Commerce & Business Administration	140	25%	1,572	17%
Criminology	54	10%	557	6%
Science	67	12%	820	9%
Balanced				
Arts	70	13%	1,157	13%
General Studies	166	30%	2,746	30%
Under-represented				
All other programs	60	11%	2,394	26%
TOTAL	**557**	**100%**	**9,246**	**100%**

Conclusion

A striking finding is the persistence of the majority of probationary students. They may take courses with varying degrees of success, but they continue to enrol even if placed on probation a second time or required to withdraw temporarily.

Another message is the variety of experiences of probationary students. Some succeed immediately, others continue to flounder, some drop out, some change programs, and so on. While there is no single experience, this study has attempted to identify the main types of experience, e.g. students in limited enrolment programs are less at risk of being placed on probation.

Further Study

This study did not examine individual courses or disciplines in order to keep the scope manageable. A brief examination suggests that some probationary students may not have had necessary language abilities and writing skills because they took EASL and DVST courses *after* taking other courses unsuccessfully. In other instances, students seem to have succeeded in a few EASL or DVST courses but then encountered problems in other courses.

The transcript analysis seems to have reached the point of diminishing returns. More insights could be gained from the transcripts, but it would take a fair amount of effort. A more productive approach might be to receive feedback from probationary students and from the college personnel who work with them. For example, counsellors might be able to confirm whether probationary students were initially aware that an unofficial withdrawal grade ("UN") lowers their GPA. Financial Aid personnel may be able to comment on the perception that some students have learned how to obtain provincial funding for up to three semesters without attending courses. Student feedback is needed to learn whether they perceive the probation system to be supportive, effective and informative.

ACADEMIC PROBATION STUDY – WORKING PAPER
PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The policy on Academic Performance states "Students whose Grade Point Average (GPA) over twelve credits is 1.50 or below are placed on academic probation". Students are notified in writing of their probationary status and are required to book an appointment with a counsellor to discuss their academic progress and receive clearance to stay enrolled. Those students who do not meet with a counsellor are not permitted to register in further courses. Those permitted to register remain on probation for at least another 12 credits. If they still are not successful, they may be required to withdraw for a semester or permanently.

More than five hundred students, making up approximately 6% of student enrolment, were on academic probation as of fall 1998 (some for the first time, some from previous semesters). The number of students on probationary status impacts the workload of counsellors and Registrar's Office employees and indirectly may affect what instructors choose to do in their classrooms.

The purpose of this study is to describe the nature and scope of academic probation at Douglas and to assist in identifying how the current academic probation policies and procedures affect students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a considerable amount of literature on the subject of academic probation. Much of this literature focuses on the amount and type of service postsecondary institutions can offer students to help them succeed. Other studies focus on the factors most likely to result in students being placed on academic probation. A brief scan of some of this literature indicates that Douglas College does not have an excessive number of students facing academic probation. Some papers mentioned academic probation rates as high as 10% and 12% of the total student enrolment at an institution.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is to take one semester's worth of unofficial transcripts and to map the flow of students through the probationary process. Some of the initial questions concerned the number of students who:

- Attained good academic standing
- Had a history of returning to academic probation
- Were required to withdraw from the college at some point
- Left the college altogether

The fall 1998 semester was chosen as the base semester for this study. It gives enough time to track how students progressed after being placed on academic probation, yet reflects current conditions. It also identifies the students who did not return to Douglas after being placed on academic probation or being required to withdraw. Many students are tracked backwards from 1998 for several years to determine when they were first placed on academic probation.

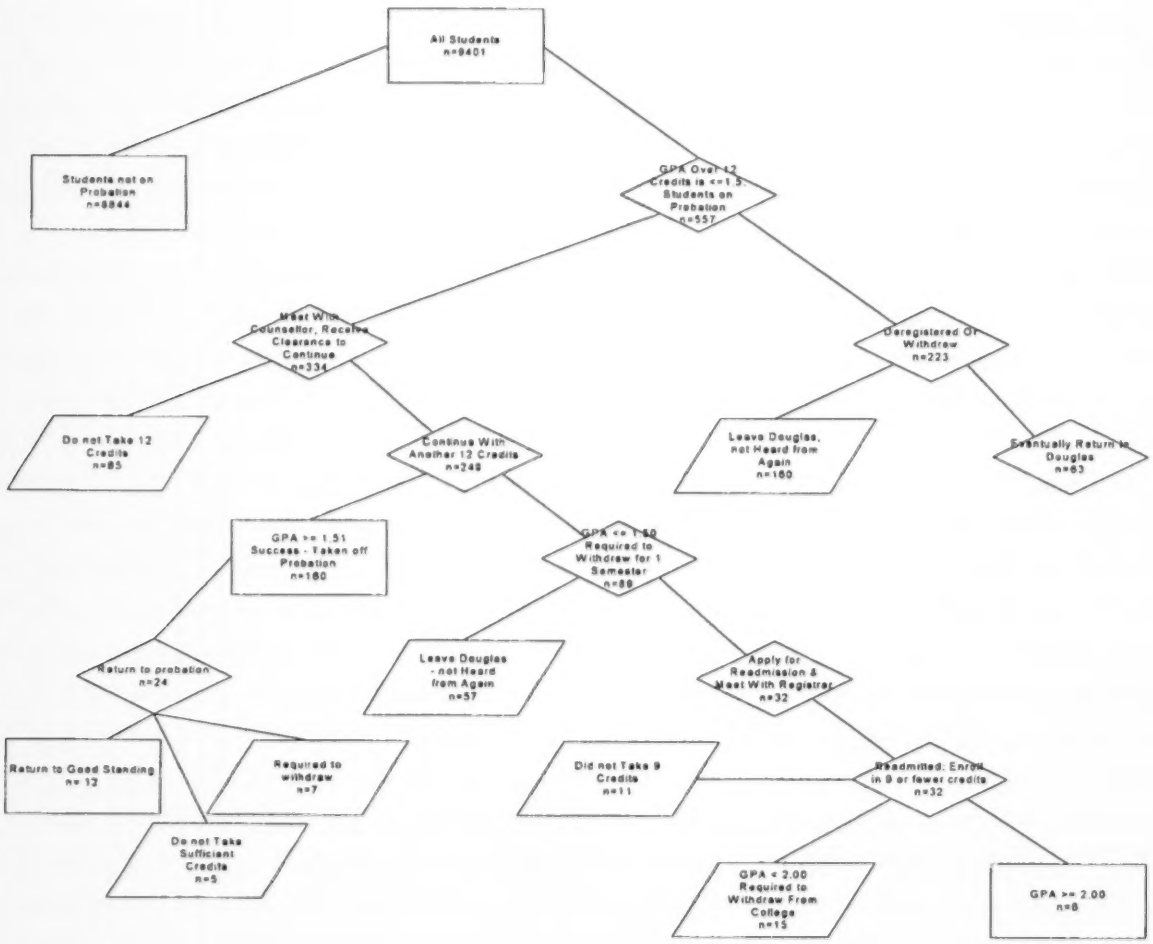
Of those who were placed on academic probation in fall 1998, the transcripts were sorted into two groups; those who were placed on academic probation for the first time in fall 1998 and those who were on probation prior to fall 1998.

OVERVIEW OF STUDENT FLOWS

All Students

The best method of understanding the flow of students placed on academic probation is to see the mapping expressed visually. The following diagram shows the flow of *all* students enrolled at Douglas College in fall 1998. Five hundred and fifty-seven of 9,227 students were on probation in fall 1998, representing 6% of the student population for that semester. Of these, 228 students (42%) were placed on probation for the first time and 329 students (58%) had been on probation at some time prior to 1998. This diagram concerns all 557 students. Two subsequent diagrams examine the flow of students who were newly placed on probation in fall 1998 and those who were on probation prior to fall 1998.

ACADEMIC PROBATION STUDY, Fall 1998


All Students n=9401
Students not on Probation n=8844
GPA Over 12 Credits is <= 1.5: Students on Probation n=557
Meet With Counsellor, Receive Clearance to Continue n=334
Deregistered Or Withdrew n=223
Do not Take 12 Credits n=85
Continue With Another 12 Credits n=249
Leave Douglas, not Heard from Again n=160
Eventually Return to Douglas n=63
GPA >= 1.51 Success - Taken off Probation n=180
GPA <= 1.50 Required to Withdraw for 1 Semester n=69
Return to probation n=24
Leave Douglas - not Heard from Again n=57
Apply for Readmission & Meet With Registrar n=32
Return to Good Standing n= 12
Required to withdraw n=7
Do not Take Sufficient Credits n=5
Did not Take 9 Credits n=11
Readmitted: Enrol in 9 or fewer credits n=32
GPA < 2.00 Required to Withdraw From College n=15
GPA >= 2.00 n=8

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To summarize the previous diagram:

Number of Students	% of Students	Academic Probation Status
166	30%	Achieved good standing by summer 2001 But 24 (4%) of these were subsequently placed on probation again.
217	39%	Left the college permanently
63	11%	Left the college temporarily
15	3%	Required to withdraw from college
96	17%	Still on probation (may not be enrolled in some semesters)
557	100%	Total

Between 25% and 30% of students who go on probation eventually succeed (i.e. they achieve good standing status); approximately 45% do not succeed (those who leave the college permanently or are required to withdraw from the college), while another 30% are still in the probationary process (have not completed enough credits to have their status reevaluated or left the college temporarily).

Several students have a history of going on and off of probation at various times. Of all 557 students on probation in fall 1998, 56 students (about 10%), have been on probation more than once *either before or after* fall 98, i.e. they have completed enough credits so as to return to good standing and then subsequently return to probationary status. A small group of students have been put on permanent withdrawal.

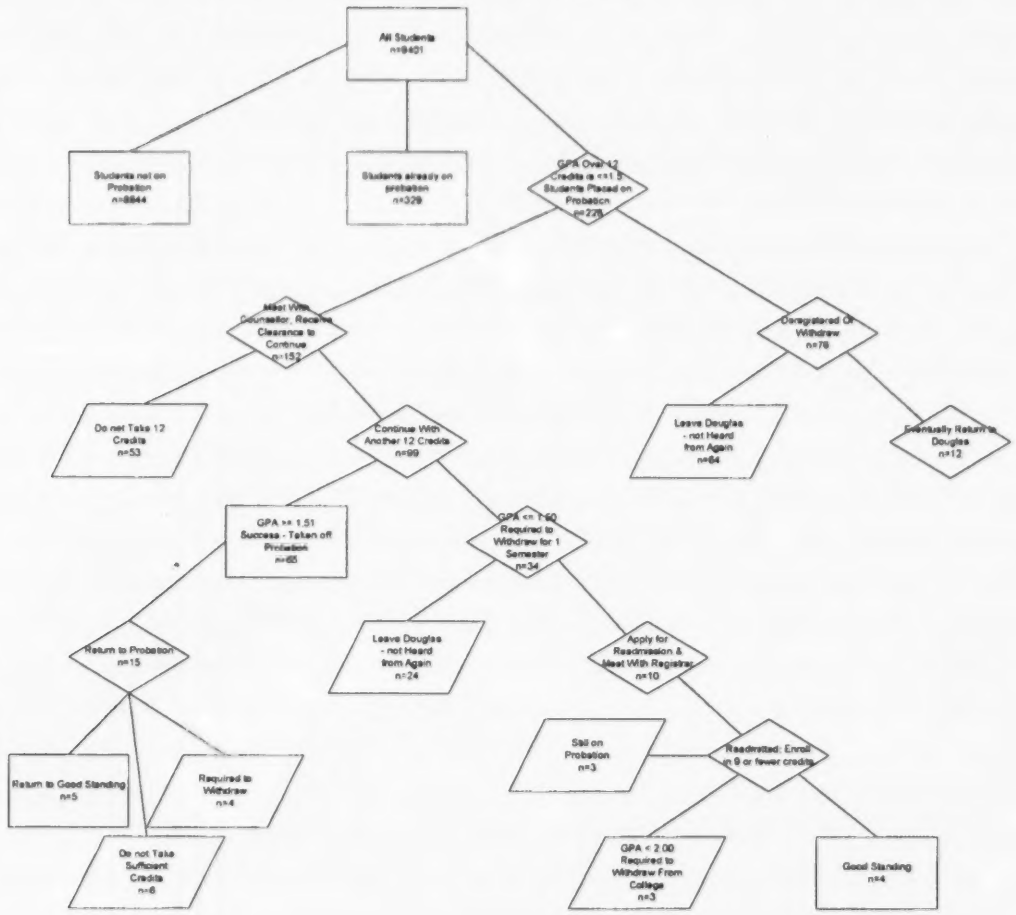
Some students on probation are new to the college and others have been around for many years. Indeed, some transcripts go back as far as 1972, illustrating just how long a history a student may have at Douglas College.

Students on Probation for the First Time in Fall 1998

Two hundred and twenty-eight students, comprising 41% of all 557 probationary students in this study, were placed on probation for the first time in fall 1998. One hundred and fifty-two (67%) of these 228 first time probationary students met with a counsellor and received clearance to continue, and a further 76 students (33%) were deregistered or withdrew from the college altogether. Of the students who withdrew, 47 of them were enrolled at Douglas for two or more semesters and completed an average of 28 GPA hours, while 17 students attended Douglas College for only one semester (fall 98) and withdrew immediately. Twelve (16%) of the 76 *students who deregistered or withdrew* eventually returned to the college to take more courses.

The following diagram illustrates the flow of students placed on probation for the *first time* in fall 98.

ACADEMIC PROBATION STUDY
Students on Probation for the First Time in Fall 98



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To summarize the previous diagram:

Number of Students	% of Students	Academic Probation Status
69	30%	Achieved good standing by summer 2001 But 15 (7%) of these were subsequently placed on probation again.
88	39%	Left the college permanently
12	5%	Left the college temporarily
3	1%	Required to withdraw from college
56	25%	Still on probation (may not be enrolled in some semesters)
228	100%	Total

One hundred and fifty-two students (67%) met with a counsellor, received clearance and continued taking courses. Of the students who took a further 12 credits, 65 of them (29%) were taken off of probation and returned to good standing status. Of these 65, 15 returned to good standing status but were subsequently placed on probation for a second time. A total of 34 students (15%) were required to withdraw for one semester, only 10 of who subsequently met with the registrar and were readmitted to the college. Of those 10 students, 3 have been required to withdraw from the college permanently, 4 have achieved good standing status and a further 3 remain on probation.

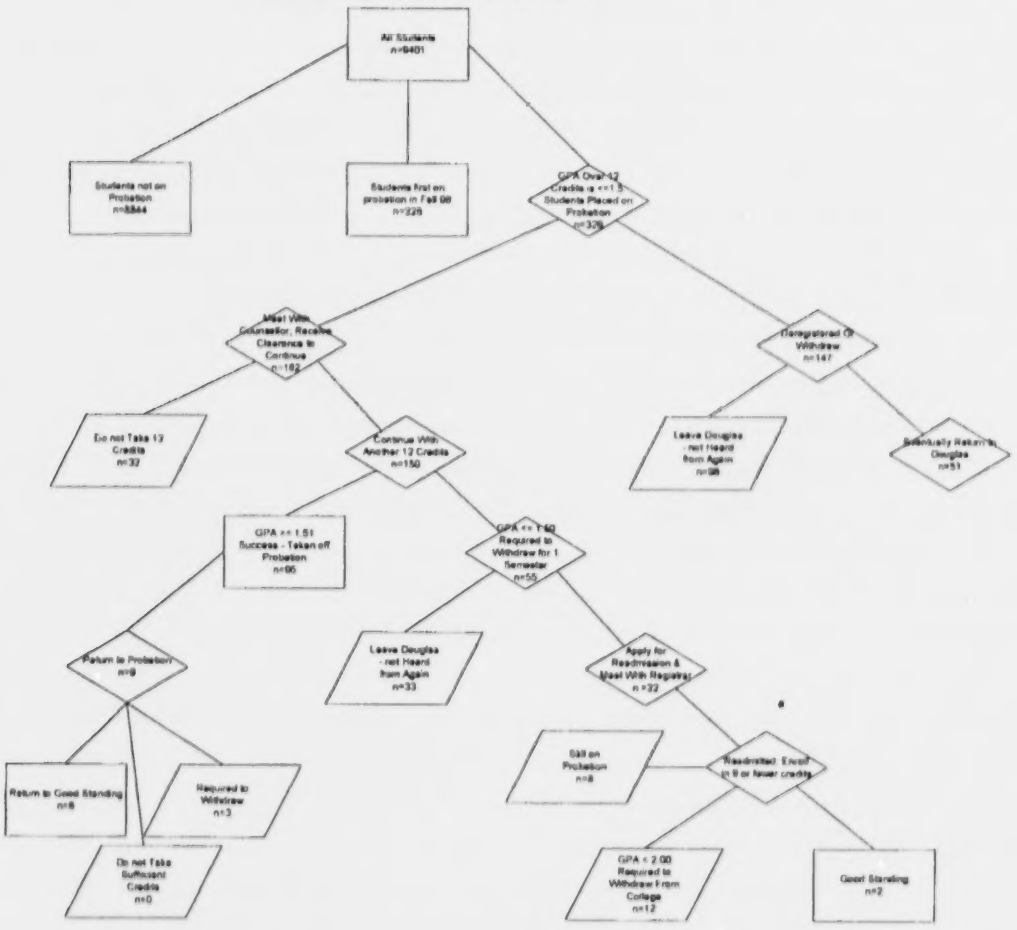
In terms of counsellor's workload, 152 students met with a counsellor before they could register in courses for the winter 1999 semester. Fifteen of these students were taken off probation and eventually returned to probationary status, necessitating an additional meeting with a counsellor. Of the students who were deregistered or withdrew from winter 1999, but returned to Douglas in a later semester, 12 individuals had to eventually meet with a counsellor before continuing to take courses. Of the 228 students who were placed on probation for the first time in fall 1998, 10 have so far met with the registrar because of continuing academic difficulties.

Students on Probation Prior to Fall 98

The following diagram illustrates the flow of students placed on probation *prior* to fall 98.

As mentioned earlier, 329 additional students on probation in fall 1998 were first placed on probation sometime earlier than the fall 1998 semester. Some of these students were first placed on probation many years earlier and may have been in good standing for a portion of this time, before returning to probationary status. Others completed courses and even credentials years or months earlier and have been placed on probation again after returning to the college for some other purpose. For example, one student successfully completed a credential in a vocational area, returned to Douglas to take academic courses and was subsequently placed on academic probation. Other students were placed on probation just one or two semesters prior to fall 1998 and have not yet completed the 12 credits needed for their probationary status to be reevaluated.

ACADEMIC PROBATION STUDY
Students on Probation Prior to Fall 98



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To summarize the previous diagram:

Number of Students	% of Students	Academic Probation Status
97	29%	Achieved good standing by summer 2001 But 15 (7%) of these were subsequently placed on probation again.
129	39%	Left the college permanently
51	16%	Left the college temporarily
12	4%	Required to withdraw from college
40	12%	Still on probation (may not be enrolled in some semesters)
329	100%	Total

This group of students who were on probation prior to fall 1998 is a good example of the persistence of students at Douglas College. Some of these students have transcripts two or three pages long and have been around Douglas for several years. Some of them have alternately been put on probation, returned to good standing, gone on probation again and sometimes even a third time in the years that they have attended Douglas College. They occasionally take a semester or more off, but eventually return. Some students take a full course load, while others pick away at one or two courses in any given semester.

Of the 329 students who were on probation sometime prior to fall 1998, 182 students had met with a counsellor at least once; many of these meetings will have taken place in the fall 98 semesters, adding to the workload of counsellors described earlier. Fifty-five of these students were required to withdraw for a semester, 22 applied for readmission and met with the Registrar before continuing to take courses. Another subgroup of this cohort had been required to withdraw from the college prior to fall 1998, also impacting on counsellors and the Registrar's workload, albeit in earlier semesters. Students placed on probation prior to fall 1998, but who have not yet completed 12 credits, are not ready to be reevaluated and did not impact the workload of counsellors in fall 1998.

DETAILED OBSERVATIONS

A second look at transcripts provided more details about the nature of students on academic probation. Age, college program, persistence, grades, Grade Point Average (GPA), transfer credit and changes in academic status were examined.

Most students on probation (72%) are between the ages of 21 and 25 years. The number of students on probation who are younger than 21 is negligible, while a further 27% of students on probation are 26 years or older.

Forty percent of students on probation change programs at some point during their attendance at Douglas, while 60% of students do not change programs. Twenty-nine percent change programs once, 8% change programs twice and 2% change programs 3 or more times. Twenty-seven percent of students changed programs *after* being placed on probation.

Most students on probation are enrolled in General Studies, Arts, Science, Criminology and Commerce & Business Administration (excluding Office Administration). There are a higher proportion of students on academic probation in Commerce & Business Administration, Science and Criminology programs than in other program areas. General Studies and Arts do not show a higher proportion of students on academic probation relative to the number of students enrolled in those programs overall. Several students entered Douglas College in Arts and General Studies programs, but by Summer 2001 had switched to a Commerce & Business Administration program.

FALL 1998 ENROLMENT

	On Academic Probation		Total Enrolment	
	Enrolment (most recent program)	Distribution	Total Enrolment	Distribution
Over-represented				
Commerce & Business Administration	140	25%	1,572	17%
Criminology	54	10%	557	6%
Science	67	12%	820	9%
Balanced				
Arts	70	13%	1,157	13%
General Studies	166	30%	2,746	30%
Under-represented				
All other programs	60	11%	2,394	26%
TOTAL	**557**	**100%**	**9,246**	**100%**

An important measure of the effect of placing students on academic probation is to determine how many students continue to enrol at Douglas in following semesters. Sixty percent of all 557 students on probation in fall 1998 returned to the college in the winter 1999 semester, and another 11% eventually enrolled in further courses after leaving for at least one semester.

One means of determining students' activity at Douglas College is to identify the number of semesters in which they have enrolled. Thirty-seven percent of students on probation in fall 1998 had attended Douglas College fewer than 5 semesters, 48% had attended 5 – 9 semesters, 13% had attended 10 – 14 semesters and less than 2% had attended 15 – 30 semesters at Douglas College.

Another means of determining student activity is to look at the number of "earned hours" attained. Eighty-four percent of students attained 9 or more hours of courses (approximately 3 courses since *most* courses are 3 credit hours), 43% have attained 30 or more hours (approximately 10 courses), while 12% have attained more than 60 hours of courses (approximately 20 courses).

An indication of persistence of students is to see how many times they appear on probation. In other words, a student may be placed on probation, return to good standing status and once again be placed on probation. Of the total 557 students on probation in fall 1998, 64 students have been on probation twice and 7 students have been on probation three times, showing that 13% have been on probation more than once during their time at Douglas. These are students who have been at the college for a considerable length of time, have taken many courses and have met both with counsellors and the registrar at least once.

About 9% of students in this study transferred courses from other postsecondary institutions. Kwantlen University College, Langara College, BCIT and Coquitlam College are the most common sources of transfer credit. (Other institutions include Capilano College, East Kootenay Community College, St. Clair College, Columbia College, University College of the Fraser Valley, University of Northern British Columbia, Open University, Simon Fraser University, an Alberta College/University, an Ontario College/University and the University of Manitoba.) About 2% of students were granted credit for Work/Life Experience, Workplace Based Assessment and Portfolio Assisted Assessment (PLAR). These transfer and PLAR credits do not enter into the GPA calculation used for probation purposes, but they serve to illustrate that not all probationary students are new to postsecondary education. Most students with transfer credit have transferred at least 9 credit hours of courses.

Grade Point Average (GPA) calculations are of particular interest to employees who deal directly with probationary students. For the most part, students who have been on probation have low average GPA's (total institutional GPA). Of 557 students in this study, none have a GPA higher than 3.66. One hundred and fifty-six students (28%) have a GPA of 0, 202 students (36%) have a GPA between 1.00 – 1.66, 182 students (33%) have a GPA between 1.67 – 2.66 and 17 students (3%) have a GPA between 2.67 – 3.66. It is important to note that Developmental Studies, English as a Second Language and a number of additional courses have mastery grading and are not considered in GPA calculations. Some students with a GPA of 0 may be earning mastery grades and be on good standing status.

Another means of profiling students on probation is to determine how many semesters they were in good academic standing. Twelve percent of students in this study have never been in good standing. In contrast, 59% of students have been on probation for only one or two semesters, while 41% have been on probation for three or more semesters. Another measure is the number of courses completed successfully since first placed on probation. Twenty-six percent have not completed any courses successfully since first placed on probation.

One hundred and fifty-seven of all 557 students, nearly 30%, are required to withdraw from the college for one major semester. Thirteen students (nearly 3%) have been required to withdraw from the college two or more times. These students are perpetually at risk of failure and are required to meet with counsellors and the registrar on more than one occasion. Twenty-seven students (5%) have been required to withdraw permanently from the college.

Twenty-four percent of 557 probationary students were in "Good Standing" in their most recent semester at Douglas, 46% were "On Probation", 7% were "In Progress", 18% were "Required to Withdraw" and 5% were on "Permanent Withdrawal".

While the transcript data allow students to be placed into descriptive categories, they are not sufficient to answer many questions, as to why students get into academic difficulty, e.g. due to a lack of ability and/or motivation. Nor do transcripts explain why some students persist but others do not.

CONCLUSION

An important finding of this study is the persistence of a significant number of probationary students in pursuing their education at Douglas College. These are students who meet with varying degrees of success after being placed on academic probation, but who continue to enrol in courses at Douglas. If placed on academic probation for a second or third time, or even required to withdraw for a semester, some return to the college. In light of the costs and time required to complete a course, the effort it takes to enrol in required courses with a reasonable course schedule and the impact on a student's life if courses are not completed successfully, it is remarkable how persistent these students are.

A second message is the variety of experiences of probationary students. A minority of students comes to Douglas for period of one or two semesters, are placed on probation, leave the college and do not return. (These students may, however, enrol at other institutions.) Other students enrol at Douglas, take many courses successfully and near the end of their program are placed on probation. Students may be placed on probation in their first or second semester, take a further 12 credits, return to good standing status and retain this status for the remainder of their academic history at Douglas. One group of students completes courses successfully in one program, changes programs and then encounters academic difficulties. For another group of students, the opposite is true; they will enrol in one program, be placed on probation, and change to another program in which they do succeed. While any of these scenarios may be happening, the extent cannot be determined accurately without reviewing transcripts in more detail, and contacting students to find out first hand what their experiences of academic probation have been.

The scope of the investigation did not include looking systematically at particular courses or programs. However, a brief examination of transcripts indicates that some students may not have the necessary language abilities and writing skills to succeed in regular courses. Evaluation of some of these transcripts indicates that some probationary students take English As a Second Language (EASL) and Developmental Studies (DVST) courses after trying to take other courses unsuccessfully. In other instances students are first successful in EASL or DVST courses but then have problems once they enrol in regular courses. A number of students in Commerce and Business Administration programs appear on academic probation. There appears to be a higher incidence of academic probation in open enrolment programs than in closed enrolment programs. There are some examples of transcripts where students do well when they are enrolled in an open enrolment program, then run into academic difficulty once they transfer into a closed enrolment program such as Computer Information Systems (CISY).

Discussion with employees at the College indicates that one factor causing students to be placed on probation is that many seem unaware of the significance of receiving an unofficial withdrawal grade ("UN") on their transcript. They do not seem to grasp that a "UN" grade is factored in to the calculation of their GPA.

Personal communication with a representative from Financial Aid indicates that some students (not necessarily in the study cohort) are able to acquire funding to support enrolment in courses, and then not attend classes. Apparently it is possible for students to obtain funding for up to three semesters without repercussion if the student does not complete courses successfully. Some of these students have very valid reasons for not completing courses successfully, while others might be abusing the Financial Aid system.

As this study has discerned, there are many different things happening with students on probation. This is a fairly diverse group of students of which only certain things become apparent when dealing with transcript data. Further investigation by means of a survey, interviews with counsellors, or a focus group with students would be necessary to more clearly pinpoint what is happening to this group of students.

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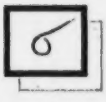

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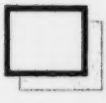

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